

Columnists

Where have we gone wrong?

By Father Paul J. Cuddy

Mrs. X, a friend of many years, though not a resident of this diocese, is greatly hurt. She and her husband are strong, practicing Catholics. All seven of their children went to Catholic elementary and high schools. Yet the results have devastated her soul. She wrote:

"Dear Father,

Where have I gone wrong? We did all we could to give a strong Catholic life to our children. Three are practicing. One, our daughter, teaches CCD in her parish. Two others do go to church regularly. Two others are inactive, though they did have their children baptized. But two who were especially religious started to go to some Bible study group, and ended up joining a Bible Baptist denomination. Where have we gone wrong?"

Dear Mrs. X,

The only wrong thing is your blaming yourself. You did your part. Now the children are adults, and what choices they make are theirs. We can furnish shoes for our children, but we cannot walk for them.

Your family seems typical of many today, split in many directions. I often meet young or middle-aged men and women who tell me: "We are not practicing Catholics any more." They seem to expect an argument or a rebuke. I just smile and comment: "Well you've got lots of company," and add them to my prayer list. You can't argue or scold people into fidelity. Regarding the two children who are caught up in Bible adoration: I am reminded of a famous Irish author who left the Church. He was asked: "Will you join some other church?" Acidly, he retorted: "I haven't lost my reason. I haven't left a religion which is logical for something which is not!"

Some will think this harsh, but I remember Dominican Father Farrell, author of that great four-volume "Companion to the Summa," predicting that we were approaching an anti-intellectual religiosity. It has come to pass.

Just think, until recently, the nation's number one Bible teacher was Jimmy Swaggert, with millions of disciples. According to his biblical interpretation, all Catholics are going to hell. At least we won't be lonesome. These

On the Right Side

dozens of TV evangelists all proclaim contradicting doctrines, yet claim the same authority, the Bible. The Holy Spirit is not the spirit of contradiction, but was sent to the Church which has been on earth since the first Pentecost, the historic Catholic Church.

The freewheeling Bible worshippers, with an unconscious arrogance, consider each person an infallible interpreter of the Bible. So self, instead of Christ's Church, becomes the norm and teacher. This is sad from the viewpoint of both religion and intelligence.

I am sure you pray daily for your children. That is good. But you agonize, and that is less good. I am sending you a copy of a little 24-page booklet, "Acceptance," written by Father Vincent Collins. It has reached a printing of 3.5 million copies. It doesn't say anything you don't know, but it has helped so many people.

Father Collins wrote: "It took me a long time to realize that some of my problems were of my own making. For instance, I thought that it was my duty to try to solve other people's problems, arbitrate their disputes, and show them how to live their lives. I was hurt when they rejected my unsolicited advice. I finally learned that you cannot help people unless they need help, are willing to be helped, want you to help them, and ask you to help them. Even then you can only help them to help themselves."

Dear friend, you will save yourself a lot of grief and really practice the will of God if you take on the serenity prayer: "God grant me the SERENITY to accept the things I cannot change; COURAGE to change the things I can; and WISDOM to know the difference."

My love to all the children whom I remember so happily.

Jesus sends the Spirit

By Cindy Bassett

Annas, a high priest of the temple in Jerusalem, was clearly annoyed with this intrusion by his son-in-law, Caiaphas. He made no pretense of even hiding it, and Caiaphas felt Anna's rebuke keenly when he finally did speak.

"This matter would not have kept until tomorrow?" Annas asked shrilly. "Today is a holiday in case you have forgotten."

Then, as he gazed at the crowds below, his tone brightened somewhat and he added, "I don't think I have ever seen so many Hebrews in Jerusalem for the Feast of First Fruits. Many will also make contributions to the temple treasury, no doubt."

"Which makes this new action by these followers of Jesus all the more blasphemous! I say we must arrest them all!" Caiaphas said, coming right to the point of his hasty meeting.

"Caiaphas, you must proceed cautiously," his father-in-law advised. "This is no different than the manner in which you dealt with the Jesus problem in the first place!"

"Ah, but this problem has not been solved so easily as we first thought with the death of Jesus," Caiaphas explained. "This morning at 9, these followers began preaching to the huge crowds about Jesus. Now they are telling the people that it was all part of God's plan that Jesus be crucified. They quote King David and the prophets to support their wild claims!"

"This is nothing new," Annas replied. "We have already circulated the story that Jesus' own followers stole his body in order to preach his resurrection from the dead!"

"A new rumor, perhaps even more dangerous, has started," Caiaphas continued. "Now they are saying that the Spirit of God has come down on them. It has been reported to me that something resembling fire appeared over the heads of these apostles of Jesus during a violent windstorm. Afterwards, those who listened to them preach — Parthians, Medes, Egyptians and other foreigners — all heard the words in their own languages!"

"Impossible! Most of these leaders are simple Galileans," Annas challenged. "Just another foolish trick!"

"Then how do you explain the 3000 new fol-

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lowers who were baptized today?" Caiaphas asked.

"I don't know, but we must still be prudent," Annas warned. "If these apostles are so popular, we may want the Romans to deal with them — for political crimes. We should keep our own hands clean. But, Caiaphas, today is a holiday and there is nothing to be done. Especially when these pilgrims come with generous contributions. Tomorrow, you can call a meeting of the Sanhedrin!"

Meanwhile, after all of the new believers had been baptized into the new church, Peter and the apostles gathered for a prayer meeting.

"The Spirit has come into our midst just as Jesus promised," Thomas commented. "We have not even left the city, and already we've told many nations about the new kingdom!"

"And there is much more that we shall accomplish because of the Holy Spirit," Peter said. "We have been given the power to heal the sick and perform miracles!"

"Perhaps now is the time to confront the Sanhedrin," Simon the Zealot chimed in.

"I am certain that even now they are making plans after the events of today," John replied. "You may receive your wish very soon, Simon!"

Scripture reference: Acts 2:1-41. The feast of Pentecost was originally a holy day for Hebrews. On that day, they brought a portion of the first fruits of their crops as a sacrifice in thanksgiving to the Lord. The very first Pentecost after the ascension of Jesus was when the Holy Spirit came to empower the apostles for their work.

Meditation: Holy Spirit, please inspire us to do the work necessary to help bring about the new kingdom of Jesus.



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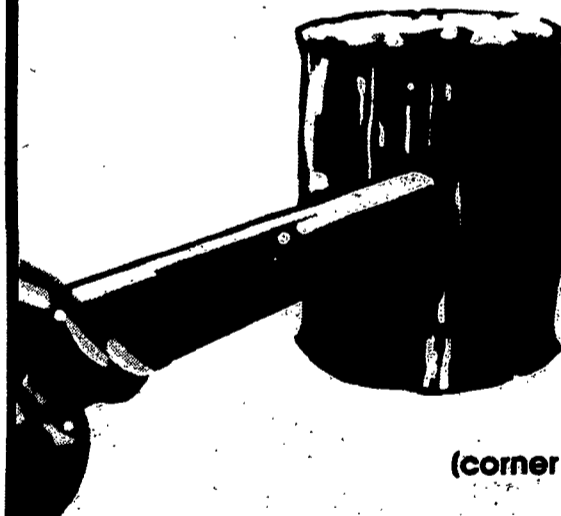
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